

First in the West

First Women Jurors Were Wyoming Residents

(Submitted by Elaine B. Fairbanks)

The first women to ever serve on a jury were Wyoming citizens. They served in 1870 on a jury summoned by Sheriff N. E. Boswell at the order of Justice J. W. Kingsman and Justice Howe.

With the construction of the railroad into Wyoming in 1867 came an assortment of characters that can be described only as riff-raff. When the population of the state reached a sufficient number Wyoming was authorized as a territory and the towns of Green River, Rawlins, Laramie and Cheyenne were practically in the hands of highwaymen, robbers and gamblers. When their population in all counties reached 8000, indignant citizens were able to organize city governments and vigilance committees. These rendered only temporary help. Selection of a

jury was difficult because most of those who served would not condemn the wrong-doers. To establish law and order Justice J. W. Kingsman and Justice Howe concurred that women jurors would help solve the problem.

In 1870 in Albany County, Wyo., six women were summoned to serve on the grand jury. They were Eliza Stewart, a school teacher; Mrs. Amelia Hatchner, a widow; Mrs. C. P. Hilton, wife of a physician; Mrs. Mary Blackel, wife of a clerk; Mrs. Agnes Baker, wife of a merchant; and Mrs. Sarah D. Pease, wife of a deputy clerk in the court.

These were the first women summoned to serve on a jury in any jury anywhere recorded.

Leaders in

Registration Extended